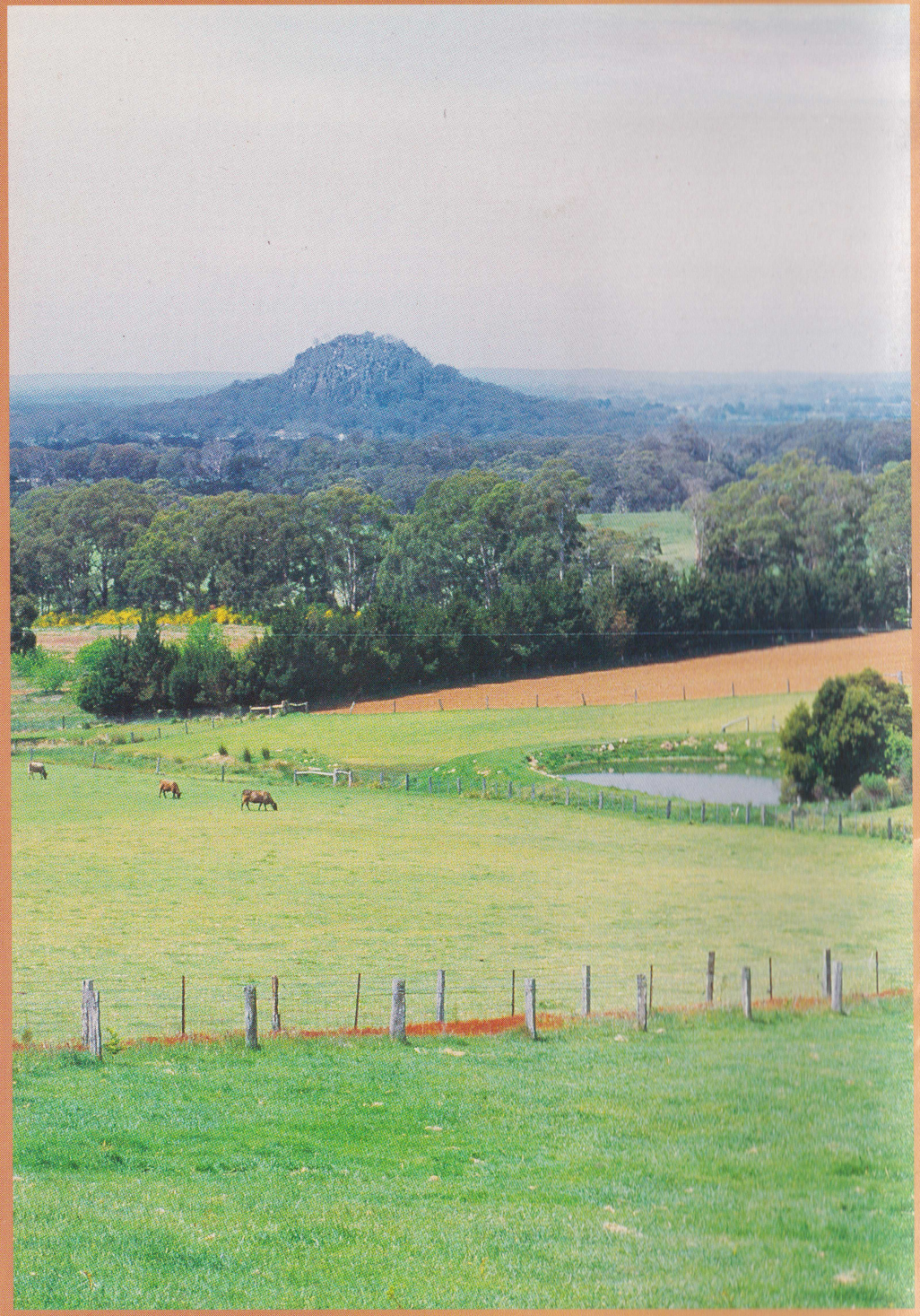


RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE $8.00

THE HANGING ROCK

Marion Hutton

With my best wishes

Marion Hutton

9 Dec. 1991

FOREWORD

The mystical Mount Diogenes – so named by surveyor Robert Hoddle in 1844, but long rejoicing in its evocative title Hanging Rock – has been from earliest times a place of mystery and a magnet for visitors, an intriguing spot for picnics, sporting events and adventure.

The first Australians, the aborigines, found shelter there and thousands of their successors have delighted in the Rock and its surroundings, the scene, amongst other events, of marriages, celebrations, athletic carnivals, hot air balloons and vintage car rallies.

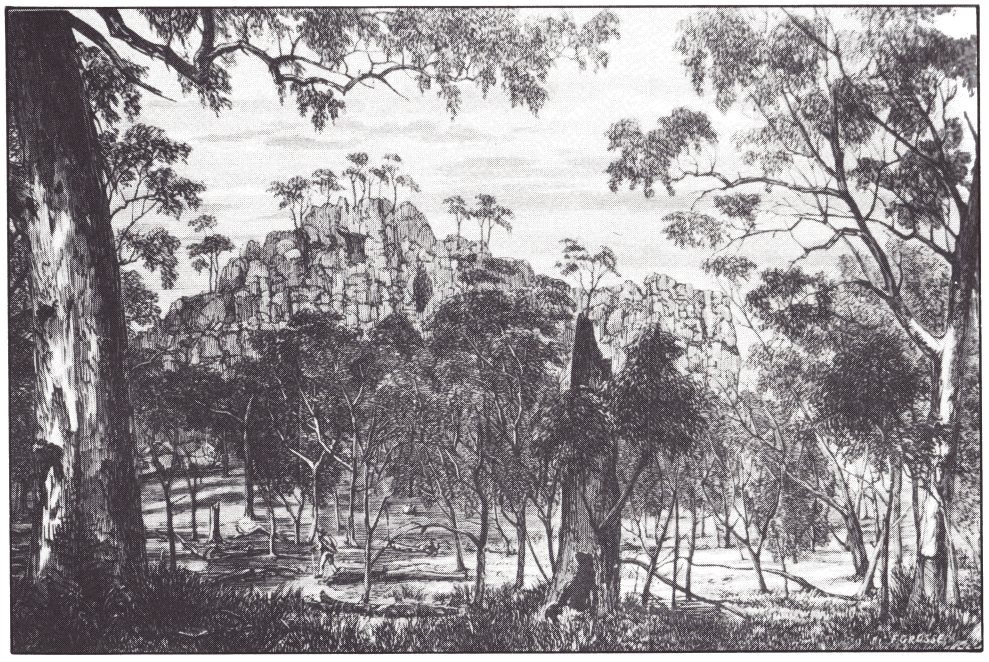
Marion Hutton has put it all together in an absorbing little history, as a companion to her history of Macedon and the Mount, and has done so after careful research and with enjoyable colour and detail, from the first account of a Boxing Day picnic in 1864 and the first picnic race meeting on New Year's Day 1878.

One encouraging part of the story is the willingness of successive owners, groups of neighbours, and finally government, to join in preserving one of our most unusual features and the wildlife which lives there.

Having gone to picnics there many times as a boy, (and having wriggled through the rock tunnel known as the "Squeeze"), I congratulate Marion Hutton and the Mt Macedon and District Historical Society on producing this valuable and delightful booklet.

Dick Hamer

The Hon. Sir Rupert Hamer,
K.C.M.G., E.D., Hon. LL.D., (Melb.), LL.M.



From an engraving of an early photograph by Richard Daintree.

Proceeds from the sale of this publication will aid the collection and preservation of local heritage by the Mt Macedon & District Historical Group.

Colour photographs on front and back cover courtesy of John Keating.

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1st edition, 1991.

HANGING ROCK

The Mystical Mount Diogenes

The Hanging Rock, that remarkable solitary peak which rises abruptly from the surrounding plain just 8km from Woodend, has been a focal point for gatherings since the early days of white settlement. When Joan Lindsay's story "Picnic at Hanging Rock" was made into a film in 1975, the Rock became instantly famous. The tourists started to come and have continued to do so in increasing numbers.

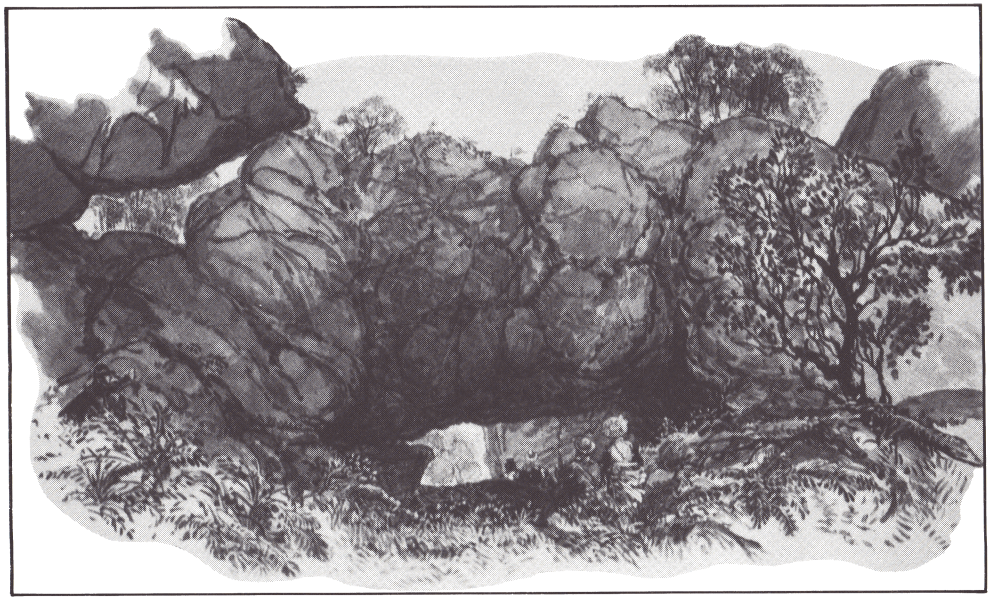
It was some years after the first settlers arrived in 1837, before the district had many inhabitants. The land was timbered so the Rock was not such a noticeable feature at first, but as the trees were cleared after more settlers came, people naturally gravitated to the remarkable formation in their midst for meetings and social gatherings. The intriguing shapes of the rocks, the caves, the hollow sound of some of their footsteps, all combined to give an air of mystique to the place and this, in later years, was the inspiration for Joan Lindsay's story.

The gold rush in the early 1850's, with its ensuing threat of bush rangers, gave rise to legends connecting them with the Rock which, of course, was situated at no great distance from the route to the goldfields.

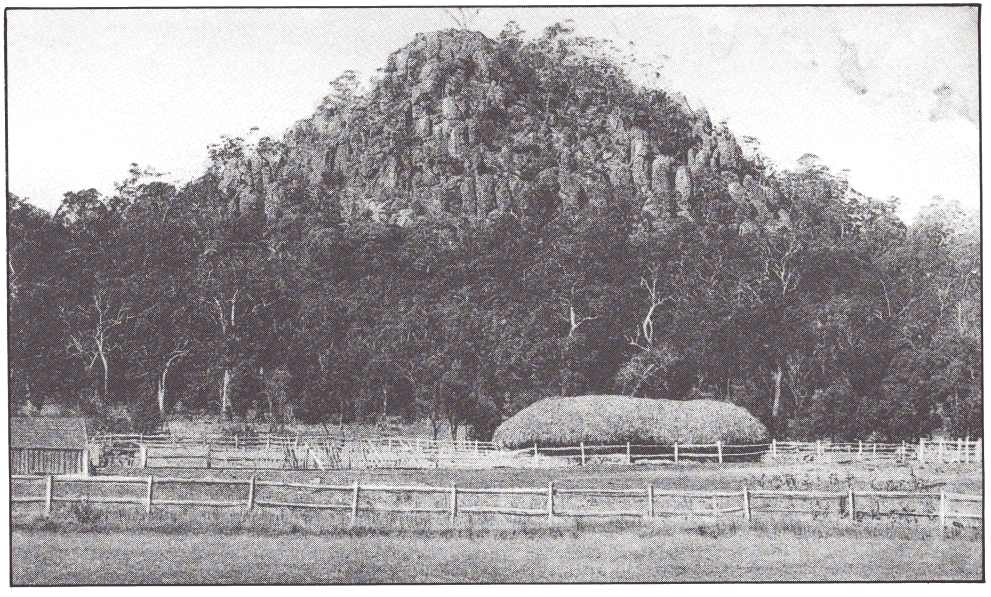
Information about this unique place is gleaned from stories handed down – few facts have been recorded and not many people know how the Rock, after being held in private hands for a number of years, became part of a small public recreation park complete with its own race course.

It was no doubt a meeting place for the Aborigines in much earlier times, but we cannot tell what particular significance the place had for them. Some twelve years ago a group of Aboriginal teenagers from the Northern Territory came on a visit. They ascended the rock happily before one lad became alarmed at something he appeared to sense; so great was his fear that he conveyed it to the others and they all hurried down refusing to return. What was their fear? It can certainly be an eerie place up near the summit on a sombre overcast day when the wind swirls between the gigantic boulders and pinnacles. "We always felt anything could happen on the Rock" were the words of one long-time resident commenting on the picnic mystery.

The height of the Rock is 711 metres above sea level but only 100 metres above the surrounding plain. It is a fine example of a volcanic mamelon in which the lava in the central plug spilled out millions of years ago to form the conical shape of the hill. In this particular mamelon, the lava had a very high soda content and the action of rain water on it resulted in an unusual rock known as 'solvsbergite', more often referred to these days as 'soda trachyte'. This same rock is also found at the Camel's Hump on Mount Macedon nearby and at Brock's Monument, a mini Hanging Rock about 8km to the east. Apart from these places it is known to exist in Norway and in Abyssinia and, in fact, it was in Norway near the turn of the century that the rock was first classified and given the name 'solvsbergite'. The following passage is taken from the Regional Guide to Victorian Geology, published in 1973 by the University of Melbourne:



"The Hanging Rock" from Australasian Sketcher, 1877.
Courtesy La Trobe Library.



Hanging Rock, late 19th Century.

"The most siliceous lavas, the soda trachytes or 'solvsbergites' were extruded in a highly viscous state, building the steep-sided mamelons of the Camel's Hump, Hanging Rock and Brock's Monument. These are eroded, helped by strong vertical jointing which at the Hanging Rock in particular has been etched out leaving large pinnacles on the summit".

The question of the name is indeed a confusing one. "Hanging Rock" is, so to speak, a nick-name dating from the late 1850's and is said to derive from the enormous boulder lying suspended and wedged between two others, forming a portal or gateway under which the path takes anyone ascending from the south side.

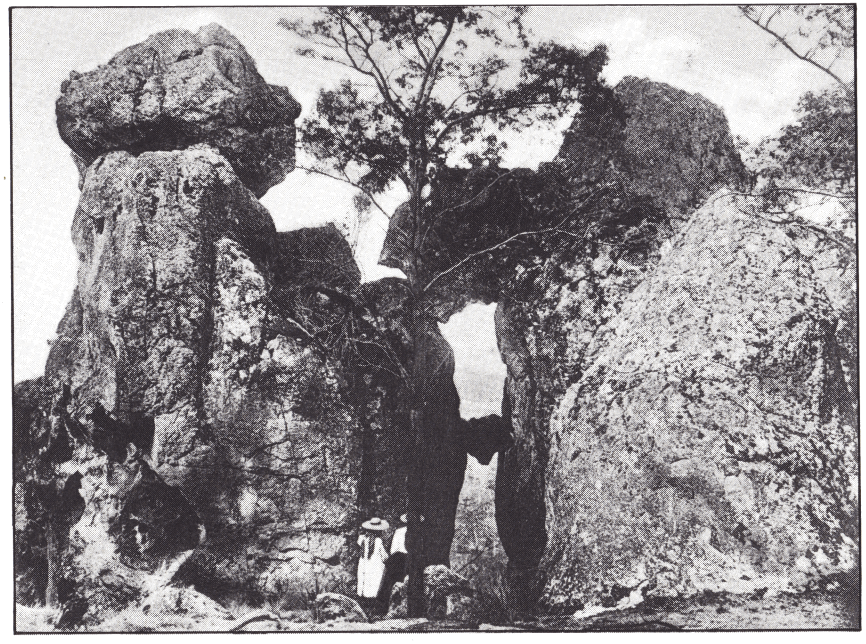
The official name is Mount Diogenes. It is so marked on surveyor Robert Hoddle's map of 1844 and it is generally assumed and oft repeated that it was Major Mitchell who named it, but the latter never mentioned it in his writings nor does it appear on any of his maps. It would not have been on his direct path when he travelled from his camp near Castlemaine to ascend Mount Macedon on 30th September, 1836, and because at that time the surrounding country through which he travelled was heavily timbered, he would not have seen the protruding rock from a distance as we can do today. It might be more correct to assume that Hoddle, wishing to keep the continuity of the Major's Greek names, was responsible for naming it "Diogenes". There is great confusion over the various names applied to this, and the neighbouring peaks. On Hoddle's map we find the Camel's Hump marked as "Alexander's Crown" and Brock's Monument as "Alexander's Head", these two so named because of their relationship with Mt Alexander away to the north. Later, from the 1860's onwards it is the Camel's Hump which appears in news articles and on maps as "Mt Diogenes" or even as "Diogenes' Head"!

To the early settlers of last century the Rock was known by still another name – that of "Dryden's Rock" – this because it was situated on the run taken up by Edward Dryden, one of the first settlers to come from Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) in 1837. We believe he came with Charles Peters who took up the run adjoining his to the north. Certainly these two were the pioneers of the district north of Mount Macedon. Dryden called his station "Newham" after the place in Northumberland, England, from whence he came, and when settlement increased enough to form something of a village it was naturally called Newham and later the name was given to the Parish and eventually to the Shire.

Dryden never owned the land on which his Rock stood. He came as a squatter and became a licencee to the Crown before being granted the pastoral lease in 1848. The first to buy the land was a Kyneton solicitor, Thomas Lloyd James, who paid £212-10s for 170 acres at a Kyneton land sale in February 1857. Three years later he sold 100 acres, which included the Rock, to Alexander Archer for £300 and the remaining 70 acres to William Adams for £245 – a tidy capital gain in so short a time!

Archer is of interest because he was the first manager of the Bank of N.S.W. in Kyneton, in the bluestone building which is now the Kyneton Historical Museum. It was during his ownership of the Rock that we have the first newspaper account of an organised picnic got up by the tradesmen of Kyneton on Boxing Day 1864. Participants were asked to bring quoits, bats and balls and were told ale, lemonade and ginger beer

The Bradfords of Brunswick, 1885.
Photo courtesy Woodend Heritage Society.



McDonald's (or McDonnel's) Lookout.

would be provided at the ground. Kyneton was alerted by the band at 8am, then *"a long string of conveyances of every description from the buggy to the spring cart filed off along the road preceded by the band and accompanied by an equally large proportion of equestrians".*

It is said that the first sports meetings were typical Highland gatherings which included tossing the caber, throwing the hammer, foot races, etc. and of course the bagpipes. This would be in keeping with the large number of Scottish people who settled in the Newham district in the 1850's. The late Colin McKenzie wrote a short history for the centenary of the Newham school in 1977 and in it he told how Jesse Shelton at these gatherings always succeeded in catching the greased pig by holding its tail in his mouth, and in climbing the slippery pole by first dusting his trousers with sand! Jesse Shelton died in 1911 aged 73, so he would just have been the age for such escapades in the 1850's.

In 1869, Alexander Archer having moved to Queensland, sold the 100 acres which included the Rock, for £550 to William Adams – the same William Adams who had earlier bought the 70 acres south of it. He was a publican and he could see the worth of this locality for his business. In 1866 he had acquired a half-acre block on the corner north west of the Rock, where the Coach Road joins the Woodend-Lancefield Road, and there he built his Hanging Rock Hotel. The following year he bought some 22 acres south of the creek, and now he had the prize – the Rock itself! He set about improving the area as a pleasure resort. He placed a weir across the creek to form a lake suitable for small rowing boats – not only rowing boats as we learn from the Kyneton Guardian of 1869 – *"the neighbouring publicans got up a full programme of sports, among them the driving of a pair of geese harnessed to a tub, across the small lake".* There were also *"foot races, jumping in sacks and other amusements not forgetting music to tempt those anxious for a dance".* The site for all this was on the west side, or south-west of the Rock, on Adams own land. He appears to have been something of an entrepreneur; he organised the sports meetings and together with the publican of the Garden Hut Hotel, Robert Walsh King, he ran the booths for refreshment and for music and dancing. They were granted temporary licences for the holiday periods and the publicity in the Kyneton papers was quite imaginative, the following jingle appearing in successive issues:

SPORTS — SPORTS — SPORTS

Where are you going to spend Christmas Day? At the HANGING ROCK RESERVE, as at King's Booth there is sure to be plenty of Music and Dancing.

Where are you going on Boxing Day? To the HANGING ROCK RESERVE, as the Doctor ordered Father to take us all to hear the UPSON'S CHRISTY MINSTRELS at King's Booth and says it will be better than all his medicine.

Where are you going on New Year's Day? To the HANGING ROCK RESERVE, as Everybody and two or three other people are going to hear the Christy Minstrels at King's Booth.

HANGING ROCK SPORTS

NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1879

STEWARDS:—
Mr Savage, Mr Birney, Mr Keating, Mr Stokes, Mr Collins
Judge — Mr W. Peters
Starter — Mr P.F. Meagher
Clerk of the Course — Mr M. Bowen
Treasurer — Mr C.J. Row
Weigher — Mr J.J. Stammers

PROGRAMME

MAIDEN FOOT RACE OF 100 YARDS. To start at 12.45 p.m.
First prize, £1. second, 10s. Entry, 1s. For boys under 11 years.

MAIDEN PLATE. To start at 1 p.m.
Of 8 sovs. For all horses that have never won an advertised race exceeding £5. Distance about one mile and a half. Weight for age. Entry 10s.

RUNNING LONG JUMP. To start at 1.30 p.m.
First prize, 15s. second, 5s. Entry 1s.

DISTRICT FOOT RACE. To start at 2 p.m.
For boys from 14 to 17 years of age residing in Newhamshire.
First prize, 20s. second, 10s. Entry 2s.

HANGING ROCK HANDICAP. To start at 2.15 p.m.
Of 15 sovs. For all horses the *bona fide* property (for six months previously) of residents in Newhamshire. Twice round the course and a distance. Second horse to save stakes. Entry 20s.

VAULTING MATCH. To start at 2.45 p.m.
First prize, 20s. second, 10s. Entry 2s 6d.

"PETER FINN" PRODUCE STAKES. To start at 3.15 p.m.
Of 15 sovs. the gift of W. Peters, Esq. For all two-year-olds the progeny of "Peter Finn". First horse to receive £10, second horse £5, third horse to save stakes. Distance about six furlongs. Weights 8st.5lbs. Entry 20s.

AMATEUR FOOT RACE OF 300 YARDS.
To start at 3.45 p.m.
First prize, 20s. second, 10s. Entry 2s 6d.

SELLING HURDLE RACE. To start at 4 p.m.
Of 10 sovs. Twice round the course and a distance over six flights of hurdles. Weight for age. Winner to be sold for £30, surplus, if any, to go to H.R. Sports fund. Selling allowances, 7lbs for every £10 reduction in price. If entered not to be sold to carry a penalty of 7lbs extra. Entry 10s.

SIAMESE RACE O. 150 YARDS. To start at 4.30 p.m.
First prize, 10s. second, 5s. third, 2s 6d. Entry 1d.

SELLING HACK RACE. To start at 4.45 p.m.
Of 5 sovs. Twice round the course and a distance. Catch weights. Winner to be sold for £16. Surplus, if any, to go to H.R. Sports Fund. Entry 6s.

RUNNING HIGH JUMP. To start at 5.13 p.m.
First prize, 15s. second, 5s. Entry 1s.

CONSOLATION HANDICAP. To start at 5.30 p.m.
Sweepstakes of 10s with 2 sovs added. For all beaten horses.

CONDITIONS

V.R.C. Rules strictly adhered to.

All complaints or disputes to be settled by a majority of the stewards, whose decision shall be final.

Three entries for each event or no race.

Post entry for all events.

No protest will be considered unless the sum of £1 be lodged in the hands of the hon. secretary, which sum shall be forfeited should the protest be considered groundless.

The first horse in each selling race to be sold immediately after the race.

Hanging Rock Handicap and Consolation Handicap shall be formed by the Stewards, or whom they may appoint.

No entries will be taken unless subject to the above conditions.

T.F. LEGGE, Hon. Sec.

Extract from the Kyneton Guardian, Wednesday, December 11, 1878.

HANGING ROCK SPORTS

NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1881

STEWARDS:—
Mr Adams, Mr Savage, Mr Ritchie, Mr Collery,
Mr McKenzie, Mr Glover, Mr F. Bowen, Mr Gaynor,
Mr Keating, Mr W.J. Dryden, Mr C. Peters
Judge — Mr P.F. Meagher
Starter — Mr W. Peters
Clerk of the Course — Mr M. Bowen
Treasurer — Mr F. Gibbs
Weigher — Mr J.J. Stammers

PROGRAMME

MAIDEN FOOT RACE. 100 YARDS. To start at 12.45.
For Boys under 14 years of age. First prize 20s, second 10s. Entry 1s.

MAIDEN PLATE. To start at 1.
Of 8 sovs. For all horses that have never won an advertised race exceeding £5. Distance about one mile and a half. Weight for age. Entry 15s.

DISTRICT FOOT RACE. To start at 1.30.
For Youths residing in Newhamshire. First prize 40s. second 20s. third 5s. Entry 2s.

HANGING ROCK CUP. To start at 1.45.
Of 15 sovs. Twice round the course and a distance. Weight for age. Winner to be sold for £50. If entered not to be sold to carry a penalty of 7lb extra, selling allowances 7lb for every £10 reduction in price. Entry 30s. Second horse to save stakes.

OLD BUFFERS' RACE. 100 YARDS. To start at 2.15.
For men over 40 years of age. First prize 20s, second 10s. Entry 2s 6d.

AMATEUR FOOT RACE. 300 YARDS. To start at 3.
First prize 40s. second 20s, third 5s. Entry 2s 6d.

SELLING HURDLE RACE. To start at 3.15.
Of 10 sovs. Twice round the course and a distance, over six flights of hurdles. Weight for age. Winner to be sold for £30. Selling allowances, 7lbs for every £10 reduction in price. Entry 20s. If entered not to be sold to carry a penalty of 7lbs.

SIAMESE RACE. 150 YARDS. To start at 3.45.
First prize 20s. second 10s. third 5s. Entry 2s.

HACK RACE. To start at 4.15.
Of 5 sovs. Twice round the course and a distance. Catch weights. Winner to be sold for £15. Entry 10s.

PICKING UP 12 POTATOES 1yd. APART.
To start at 4.45.
First prize 15s. second 5s, third 2s 6d. Entry 2s.

CONSOLATION HANDICAP. To start at 5.30.
Sweepstakes of 10s with 2 sovs added. For all beaten horses.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

V.R.C. rules will be strictly enforced. All disputes or complaints will be settled by a majority of the Stewards, whose decision shall be final.

Three entries for each event, or no race.

Post entry for all events.

No protest will be considered unless the sum of £1 be lodged in the hands of the Secretary, which sum shall be forfeited should the protest be considered groundless.

All riders to ride in jockey costume.

The first horse in each selling race to be sold immediately after the race. Any surplus to go to the Hanging Rock funds.

No entries will be taken unless subject to the above conditions.

C.J. ROW,
Honorary Secretary

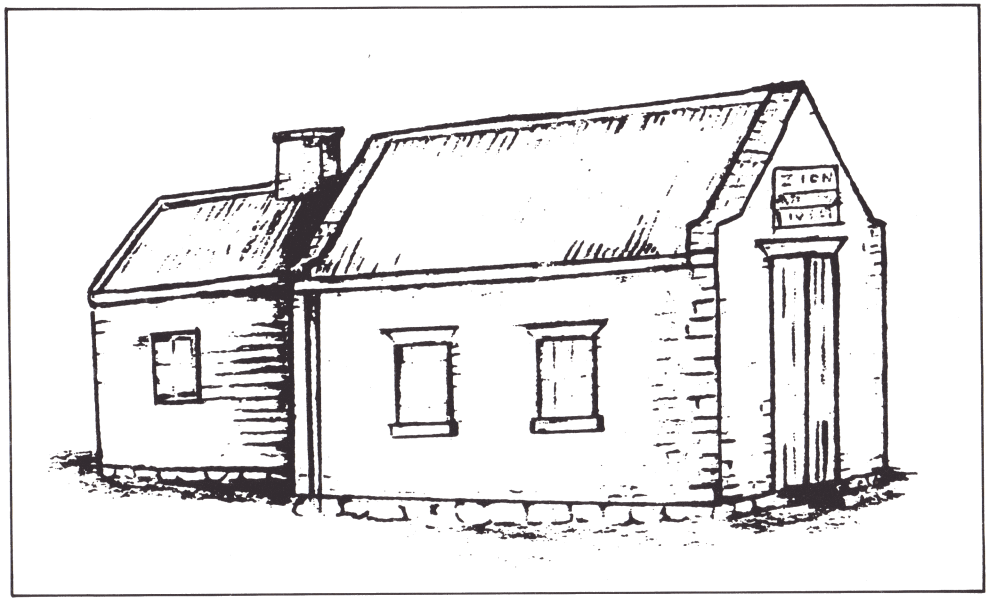
Extract from the Kyneton Guardian, Saturday, December 4, 1880.

Meanwhile, immediately east of the Rock, some 96 acres of land which had never been privately owned, was gazetted by the Government in 1870 as a reserve for recreation and water. This was at the instigation of the members of the Woodend, Newham and Rochford Road Board (precursor of the Newham Shire Council) when they realised there were moves to sub-divide and sell the land. The water was important to the neighbouring farmers, there being a permanent spring on the land as well as the creek flowing through it.

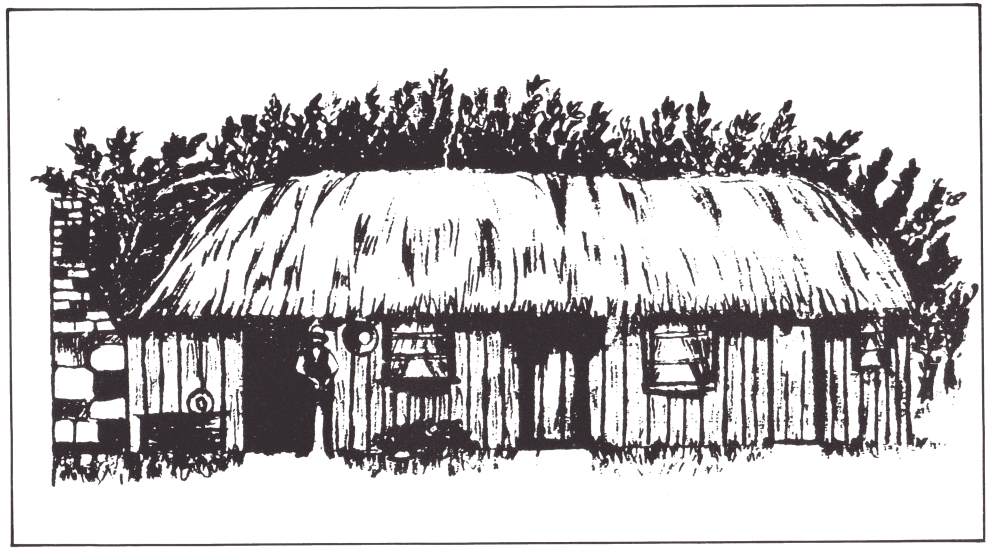
Adams must have got into financial difficulties because we find him taking out a mortgage and in 1871 he sold all but the portion with the Rock to William Anderson who already owned land south of the creek. By 1873 Adams was prepared to sell the Rock to the Government, the Newham Shire Council having initiated moves in that direction. He was willing to sell at the price he paid (£5-10s per acre) plus the value he placed on his improvements (£260). The surveyor sent to inspect reported it to be a "most preposterous valuation" but he added "I must do the owner the justice of stating that the improvements have been made in excellent taste and render the access to the summit of the Rock much easier and the place altogether more charming". The price being considered too high, there was no sale and Adams continued to own the Rock and to cater for picnics and sports. By this time people were coming from further afield, Melbourne, Sandhurst (Bendigo), Kyneton, Castlemaine, Echuca and other parts of the colony. Visitors came on all public holidays - Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year's Day - when the railways ran special holiday trains. Horse races were introduced to the impromptu programme, the local farmers competing for whips and saddles. It is an exaggeration to say that Adams laid out a race course for the purpose; he cleared a rough track among the timber for typical bush picnic races and he provided a pavilion for dancing on the flat near the lake where the sports were held.

By the end of 1875 Adams is there no more and we find another publican at the Hanging Rock Hotel advertising the sports and accommodation for the holiday period. The following year Adams finally severed all connection by selling out to Anderson, thus giving the latter the Rock and surrounding land north, west and south of it. William Anderson was a Melbourne warehouseman; he was not interested in promoting a tourist attraction himself and in fact he leased out the grounds to successive owners of the Hanging Rock Hotel for this purpose.

By this time, the sporting farmers of the district, many of them involved in breeding horses, wanted more horse racing and a better place to do it. They thought a nice little race course could be made on the Reserve east of the Rock so they worked hard through the winter of 1877 to achieve this result, then published the sports programme for New Year's Day 1878 in the newspapers. We learn that: *"Mr W. Peters presided at the annual meeting when an influential committee was formed and stewards appointed to carry out the annual sports"*. It was indeed the Peters and Drydens who were the prime movers in promoting the racing and in making the course. The stud advertisements of the day testify to their interest in horses and the programme for 1879 included a race entirely for the 2 year old progeny of "Peter Finn" belonging to William Peters. The small print informs that Victoria Racing Club rules would be strictly adhered to.



Zion Baptist Chapel 1869.
Drawings by Colin McKenzie of Newham (1905-1979).
Courtesy Helen McKenzie.



John Adams' Home, Newham.

On New Year's Day 1880, the Hanging Rock Cup made its appearance on the programme – *"Of 15 sovereigns, twice round the course and a distance"*. It seems fitting that the winner of this first Cup was Edward Dryden's aged horse "Commodore", though it has to be admitted there were only two horses in the race! The programme was still a mixed bag including foot races such as "Old Buffer's 100 yards" and "Potato Lifting", interspersed with the various horse races, the Council providing money for prizes, the publicans running the refreshment booths and increasingly sophisticated side-shows setting themselves up in the vicinity.

Meanwhile the Council was having trouble with the Reserve itself – the Water Reserve as it was called. In order to derive some revenue from grazing rights it had been fenced in but this did not please the neighbouring farmers who complained they were being denied access to water. An indication of their feeling is found in a letter to the Council from Eli Jones, owner of the land adjoining the east side of the reserve – *"The worthy lessee brandishing a big shellelagh seemed determined to die knee deep in blood rather than let me have a drop of water and as I had no desire to have my brains scattered by his bit of timber, I had to return without the aqueous fluid to the disgust of my better half as it happened to be wash day"*.

The land to the north of the Rock was occupied by various members of the Adams family (no relation of the entrepreneurial publican). Richard Adams was an early settler who had been a member of the original Road Board. His numerous relations continued to farm the area and his son John, for nearly forty years a Shire Councillor, was their spokesman. These people were staunch Baptists and the small disused brick chapel standing by the roadside north of the Reserve is a legacy of their occupation. Richard Adams had it built near his homestead in 1869 and he preached there every Sunday while a Melbourne Brother came to take an occasional service. These farmers considered the water was theirs by right and their religious convictions made them utterly opposed to racing which they associated with gambling. When the Council, uncertain of its responsibilities, requested the Secretary of Lands to have the Reserve gazetted for a racecourse as well as for recreation and water, which it then was, these farmers at once responded with a storm of protest and arranged a petition to be sent to the Minister; this brought an answering petition from the sporting fraternity. The Minister informed the Council, the Reserve being gazetted for recreation, it was already available for racing purposes.

At the same time the Council had another issue on its hands. There was mounting agitation for the Government to repurchase the Rock for the public. Anderson allowed access but made a small charge on public holidays. The place was becoming more and more popular and there were murmurings that it was shameful that it had ever been sold, with Melbourne journalists commenting likewise. Fearing that access might be denied altogether in the future, the people of Newham urged the Council to request the Government to act. With the support of neighbouring shires, a deputation was planned but in the end the Minister, the Hon. Albert Tucker, came to see for himself and he indicated that the Government would be prepared to purchase about 70 acres. It took a little while to negotiate with Anderson who was not happy with the line of the

Hanging Rock from Woodend Road, from the Australian, 1905.
Courtesy La Trobe Library.

Working Bee at the Rock Reserve.

boundary, then a portion of approximately 71 acres was purchased for £1417-12-6. This was added to the Crown Land portion (the water reserve) and the whole was reserved by an Order-in-Council of 25 November 1884 and gazetted a few days later. The date made little impact as in later years it was seldom referred to and never quoted correctly, but nevertheless it was a memorable achievement for the Newham Shire Council. A few months later, (August 1885), the stewards of the sports committee got their act together and formed an organised Racing Club in which they then became the office bearers. These were progressive developments but the Reserve itself continued to be a problem. The Council had been ordered by the Lands Department to leave it open for access to water – this because of all the complaints. It then became open slather for everyone, stray animals defiling the spring – a no win situation and the Council did not know what to do. The gates were re-hung and left unlocked, but nothing satisfied the farmers' demands for access to take their stock to water. Plans were submitted, letters went to and from the Department, but it took years of argument with meantime no revenue, before, in 1891, an acceptable arrangement was reached. Regulations were drawn up allowing an admission charge for vehicles on 12 days a year – a vehicle with 1 horse 1/-, 2 horses 2/- and a rider on a horse 6d.

By this time the racecourse was in poor shape with fallen timber everywhere making it dangerous, so the Councillors decided to hold a working bee and placed an advertisement in the Kyneton papers asking for volunteers.

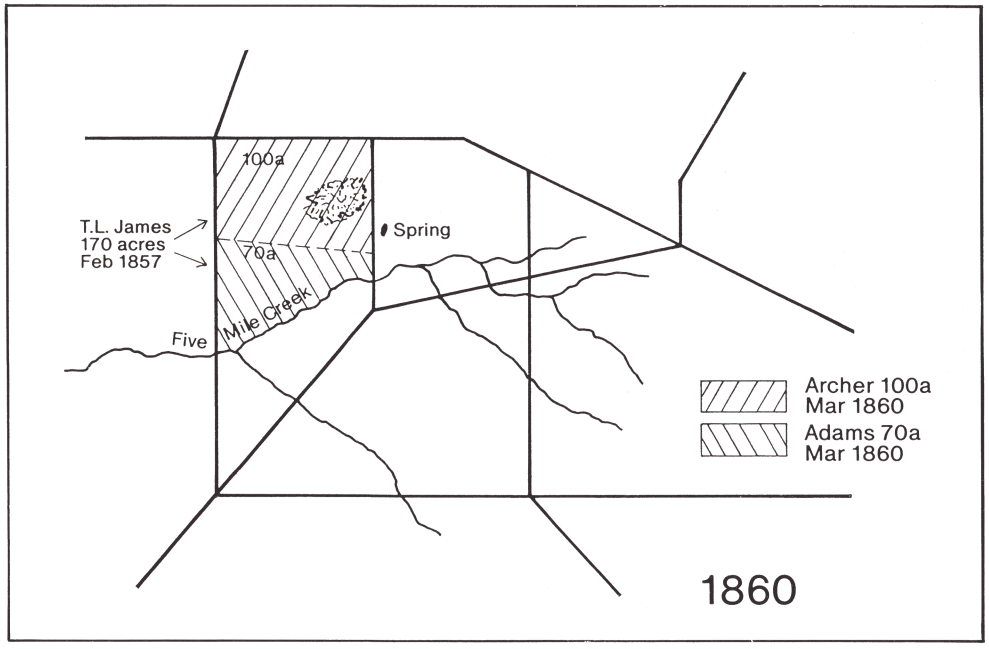
HANGING ROCK RACECOURSE

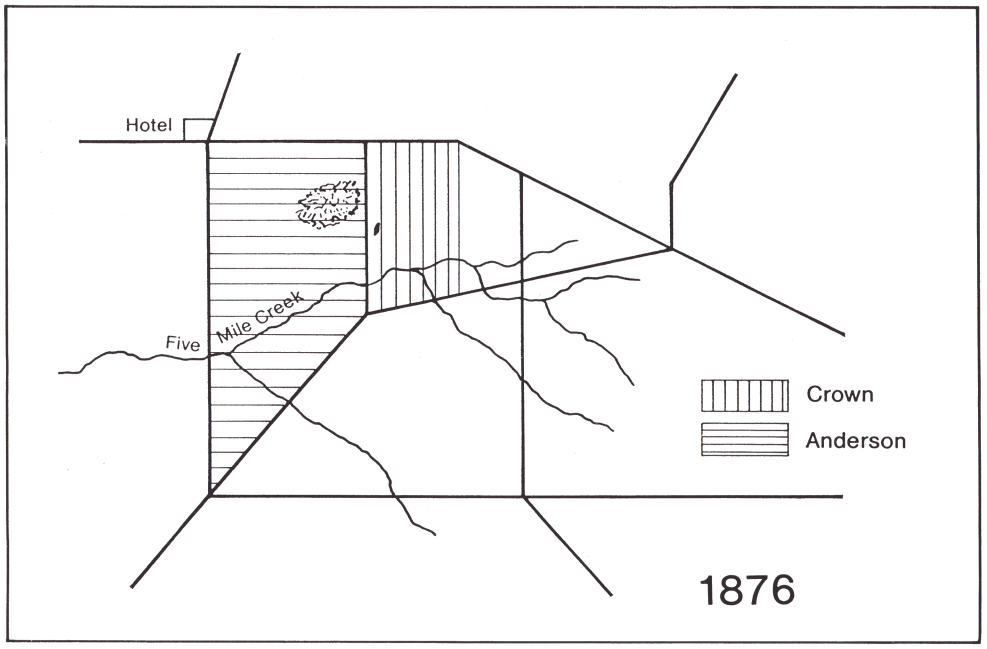
MONSTER WORKING BEE

A LARGE number of the inhabitants of the district having volunteered to give one or two days' labour in order to clear the racecourse of all the dangerous timber now encumbering the ground, it has been decided that a MONSTER BEE SHALL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th. All those having the popularity, welfare, and improvement of this beautiful and attractive spot at heart are cordially invited to co-operate in this splendid work, and are respectfully requested to assemble on the ground (in the straight) at eight o'clock a.m. Every man to supply his own tools. Several bullock and horse teams have been promised, but the services of more can be utilised.

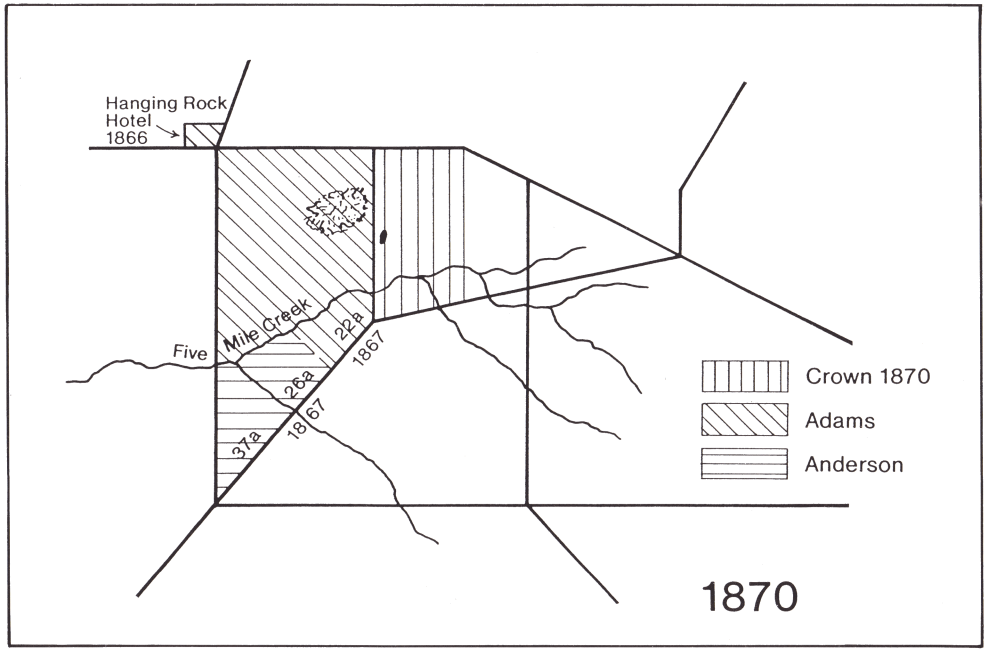
Remember the day, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th, 1891
By order, JAMES REES, Shire Secretary.
Woodend, August 31, 1891.

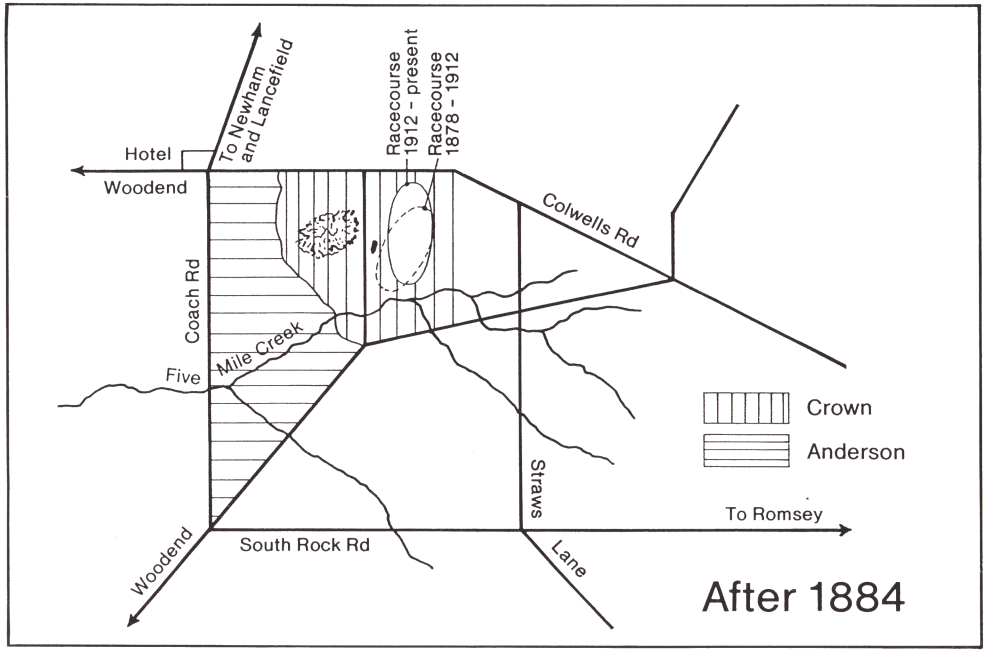
Surprisingly perhaps, in view of his antipathy to the racing, John Adams fully supported his colleagues in this venture because he was very conscious of his responsibilities as a Trustee for the Rock Reserve and also very proud of the beautiful place, so he could not bear all the adverse criticism he was hearing of the racecourse being a disgrace. It was he who went ahead early to prepare a tarpaulin shelter in which the ladies could serve the midday meal. Farmer Bryce came with his bullock team and many others brought horse teams, among them farmers Froomes, Shelton, Kenny and W.J. Dryden. All worked with a will and much was accomplished.

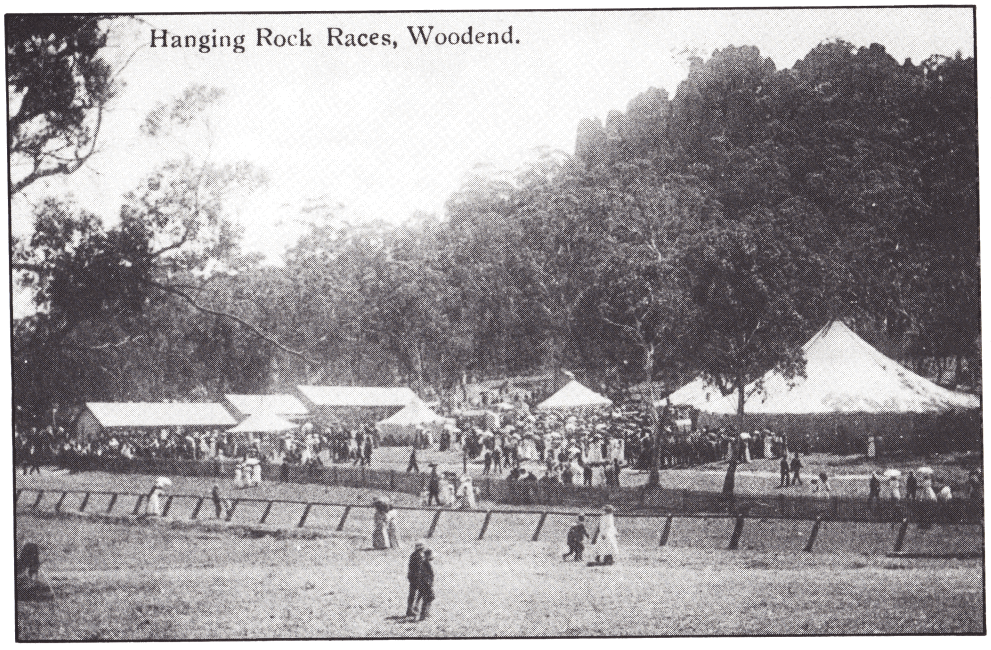




LAND TENURE AT HANGING ROCK







Race Day at Hanging Rock.

The Council had earlier formed a committee from within its own ranks, to deal with matters on the Rock Reserve such as maintenance, the ever vexatious question of rabbit control and some necessary improvements when funds were available. Thus it was, that in 1896, the dam was repaired to resuscitate William Adams' ornamental lake and four years later a carriageway was made up to the first plateau, thereby restoring the latter's old driveway. From about this time also, dates the picturesque little building described in Joan Lindsay's book as *"a wooden privy in the shape of a Japanese pagoda"* which in those days added greatly to the comfort of the ladies.

To mark the end of the 19th century and the inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth, on New Year's Day 1901, triumphal arches were erected over each of the five entrance gates and a forty foot flagpole was placed in the saddling paddock and another in pride of place on top of the Rock – the socket of the latter can still be seen on the summit.

That year saw the resolution of another contentious issue – that of an admission charge of 6d. for each person over 18 years. When the request had first been made by the Racing Club two years earlier, much opposition in the district was whipped up by the anti-racing Newham farmers. There were lively meetings in the Council chambers; John Adams stuck to his principles against all odds, supported only by his brother-in-law Eli Jones when the latter was present. He raised objections to, and fought against all concessions which might benefit the Racing Club as he was convinced the money was wanted for racing purposes. Among his fellow councillors were a few members of the Racing Club as well as many businessmen of Woodend. One of the latter stands out – Henry Daniel McKenzie of the London and Liverpool Hotel. He was a fair minded, level headed, articulate person who had been a councillor nearly as long as John Adams and he argued patiently and reasonably again and again; he pointed out that amenities were required, particularly for sanitation. At length the charge for vehicles was dropped and the regulation went through, but not in time to have it gazetted and in force for New Year's Day 1902.

The great day was becoming a popular outing for the family with newspapers estimating attendance of ten to twelve thousand people. Everything on wheels was pressed into service to convey them to and from the Woodend station. Kyneton was cleaned out of vehicles, so an enterprising Brunswick carrier Herbert Bradford, took to bringing his drays a few days early, to camp on the reserve and spell his horses ready for the hectic day. A special train carried the race horses to Woodend, and landowners allowed them to be led to the reserve across their properties along the route of the Five Mile Creek.

Meantime the Racing Club was going great guns. It had been joined by the proprietor of a store in Woodend, John C. Keating, who became Hon. Secretary and worked tirelessly for the club for some 25 years. He would attend other race meetings before New Year's Day to entice entries for the forthcoming Hanging Rock meeting. Easter meetings were introduced, but they never drew crowds to compare with those of New Year's Day. Later (1905), the rights for the refreshment booths were auctioned in Woodend instead of at Newham, thereby attracting higher prices enabling the stakes

Picnic Party at the Rock, from Weekly Times, 1911. Courtesy La Trobe Library.

Hanging Rock Race Club Committee, 1905. Included are Pat Kenny, Duncan Simpson, Clerk - Jim Kenny, Pat Kelly, Pa McKenzie, J. Johnson, Harry Kenny, J.C. Keating, Ern Morris. Photo courtesy La Trobe Library.

to be increased. Though the track had been improved by this time, it was still only 5 furlongs in length, and it was feared that it might soon cease to be recognised by the V.R.C. Byron Moore, the Secretary of the V.R.C., was invited to come and give advice. He brought with him the well known surveyor of race courses A. Tuxen. The latter was enthusiastic about the possibilities of altering and extending the course, so the Club engaged him to submit a plan and an estimate of cost. A deputation then went to the Shire Council with the following proposition: that 54 acres be vested in a Trust comprising four members of Council and four members of the Club - that water rights would not be interfered with - that the Trust be given power to charge 1/- at gate of enclosure - all this only on New Year's Day or a day substitute. This proposition caused an absolute furore stretching far beyond the local district. The Melbourne papers published editorials and readers' letters full of indignation at the prospect of this beautiful place being marred by galvanised iron fences. Locally and in neighbouring towns there were protest meetings and the Minister, the Hon. John Murray, was bombarded with letters. He decided to assess the situation for himself and arrived during a snow storm at the end of July. There were over 200 people waiting and he listened to both sides of the question for hours, then in some exasperation he suggested that no races be held next New Year's Day and if the people stayed away he would grant the Racing Club all it asked for, but if the crowds came as usual, the Club would lose the priviledges it already had. Neither party would agree to such a proposition and the Minister felt the opposition was so strong that he could not sanction the making of the new course.

A few years later in 1910 the matter was raised again. The district had become more populous and everyone was accustomed to the idea of the annual picnic race meetings which were much enjoyed. On New Year's Day 1911, when the Governor, Sir Thomas Gibson-Carmichael and his Lady were in attendance, the Minister for Lands, now the Hon. John McKenzie, also came. He was met at the station and quickly taken to the reserve where long-time President of the Racing Club, John Harley, showed him the existing course and the required alterations. The Minister expressed approval and wished to discuss matters with the Shire President, who that year was none other than John Adams, but understandly perhaps, the latter could not be found! Two weeks later sanction was given. Mr Tuxen had died in the meantime, but his plans had been kept and the contract to proceed was let. It was a bad winter that year of 1911 and the progress was slow. Within 9 weeks of the forthcoming New Year meeting, only half the work was completed and so the contract was terminated and day labour employed and with the aid of working bees, the track was ready just in time, though the surrounds were still in a very rough state. There was not time for grass to grow, so barley was sown, as young barley was said to make an acceptable surface for a race track.

The following words taken from *The Age* of January 2nd 1912 give a picture of that picnic scene at the Rock:

"From early morning there had been vehicles on the road. First came vans, spring carts, then wagons lumbering along drawn by horses from the plough. Whole families had to be crowded into the wagons and so had the provisions. Scarcely had the horses been unhitched

Photo courtesy Mrs Mary Davies.

Photo courtesy Barbara Strange.

and tethered and the wagons unloaded, than the drags dashed into the area, whips cracking, drivers shouting, the picnickers laughing. The vehicles crowded the centre of the race course and then overflowed on to the other acres of the reserve. Last of all came the hooting motors carrying visitors from Macedon and places more distant. The sun bathed the scene in brilliance as it flicked the caps and colours of the jockeys. The warm light rested on white table cloths spread unevenly on the ground, covered with poultry, sandwiches, fruits, jams, sweets or other picnic fare. The light made the blue smoke from the big boiler where all came for their supply of hot water, look more blue as it curled amongst the trees. Of the many thousand people there, only a meagre proportion took the racing as the most important part of the day's outing. The last race was not run until after 6 o'clock and it was not till the late moon rose its shining face above the Camel's Hump that the last picnickers drove slowly away from the grounds."

There were 20,000 people there that day and every year that scene would be repeated. It was the one day when all the country folk of the wide surrounding district could catch up with each other and tongues wagged as latest news and reminiscences were exchanged. The discomfort of dust on the road was forgotten and all were oblivious of the midday sun's heat in the enjoyment of the reunion with each other. The children were happy with merry go-rounds and side shows, as well as the band to keep them entertained.

It took some time to complete the buildings which had earlier been moved back to make way for the new course. The unsightly banks opposite the saddling paddock were greatly improved by the plantings arranged by Mr Joseph Firth, Superintendant of the State Nursery at Macedon.

It had become customary for the State Governors to come over from Government Cottage at Upper Macedon, when on holiday there, which meant that several of Victoria's Governors experienced the annual carnival occasion. There was never much ceremony apart from the National Anthem and speeches of welcome by the Presidents of the Shire and of the Racing Club. Sometimes the vice-regal party would partake of afternoon tea served out of doors by Mrs J.C. Keating, wife of the efficient Secretary. In 1916 it was Sir Arthur and Lady Stanley who motored over and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. It went down very well when Lady Stanley entered into the spirit of the occasion by placing a bet on 'Lucky Bean' who turned out to be the winner of the Cup!

Understandably attendance numbers were down slightly during the 1914-18 war years, but afterwards the crowds were soon as great as ever. The increasing use of the motor car gradually changed the mode of transport and eventually the appearance of the picnic ground on race days. 1925 was a record year with hundreds of cars parked under the trees; dozens of side shows and the band gave a lively atmosphere but the gaiety was tinged with sadness as the popular Secretary J.C. Keating had died a few days earlier. The jockeys wore black arm bands as a mark of respect and it was J.E. Keating who took his father's place in the position of Hon. Secretary.

The 1920's cottage – the first kiosk.
Photo courtesy Mrs Mary Davies.

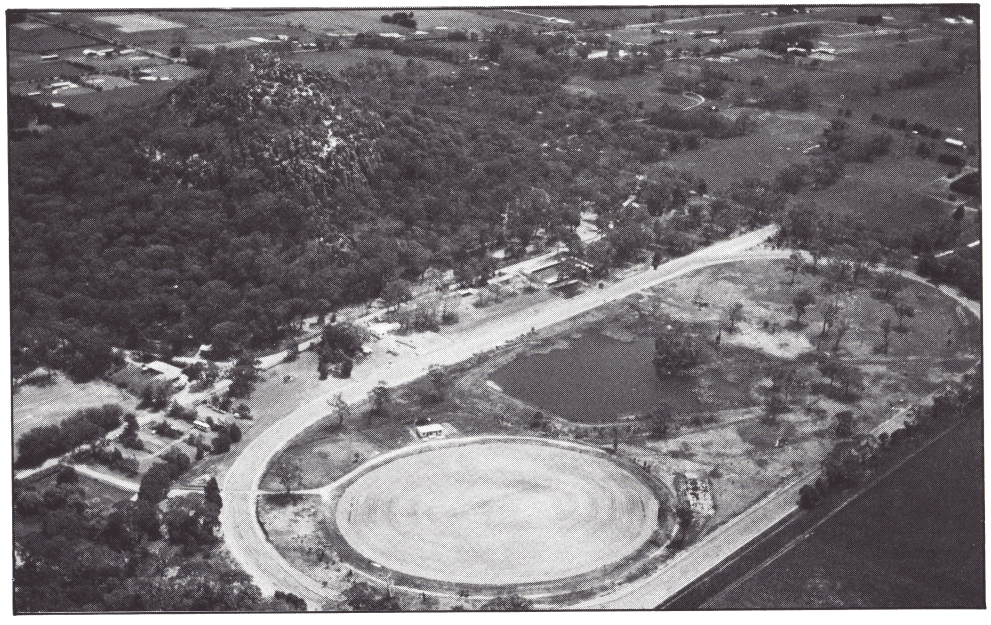


Photo courtesy John Keating.

It is not possible in a short history to detail all the many changes in lay out and in management at the Rock Reserve, in fact there are not many helpful records available for those years.

It was probably in the 1920's that a caretakers cottage was built; it was placed where the present kiosk now stands. Bill McGarry was caretaker for many years and he worked hard to maintain the Reserve in good order. His wife provided refreshments and was kept busy when parties of Clyde School girls came with their parents on their leave-out days. The school had been established in 1919 in the fine old building which had been Braemar Guest House and the Rock was the girls favourite place to go. Mrs Bryce who lived on the farm nearby remembers Mrs McGarry coming, sometimes late in the day, to ask for an extra chook, or perhaps two, as a party was expected next day. The birds had to be hurriedly despatched and plucked then taken over early next morning for Mrs McGarry to cook.

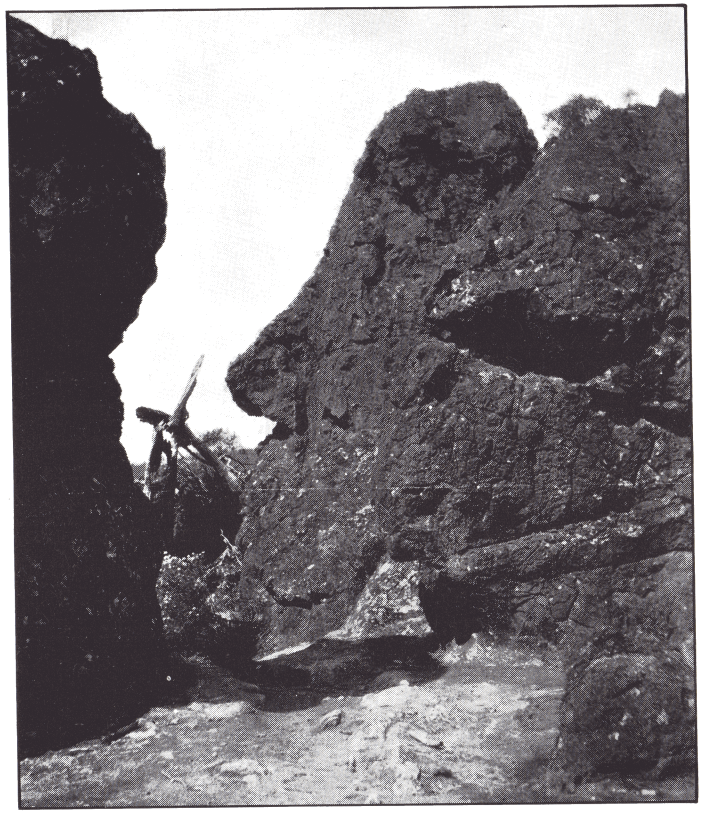
During the Second World War, the difficulty of transport with petrol rationing made it impossible to continue to hold race meetings at the Hanging Rock, though in 1942 the Club was granted permission to hold the New Year's event at the Woodend racecourse. In an effort to maintain the picnic atmosphere, hot water was supplied as was always done at the Rock. When the race days started up again after the War, the Easter meetings were discontinued in favour of the annual Australia Day event.

In 1959, the Councillors of the Shire of Newham and Woodend (so called since 1904) who formed the Committee of Management invited three members of the Racing Club to join that Committee and this arrangement continued until quite recently when legal complications, caused by organisations requiring to be incorporated, made it no longer possible to share the management.

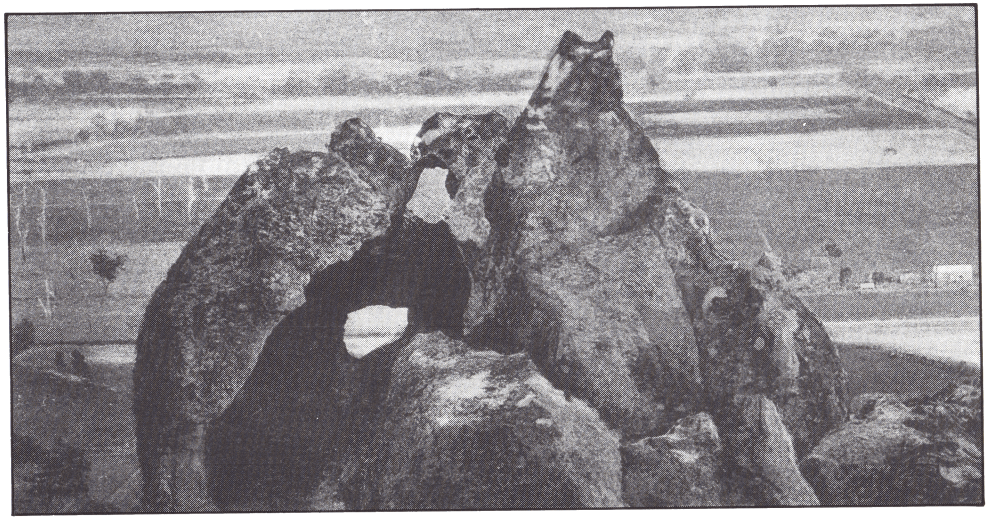
In 1963, Russell Davies became caretaker and his wife then served the refreshments but they continued to reside at their farm in Bryce's Lane. They were promised a new kiosk dwelling but had to wait till 1968 before it materialised – the same kiosk which is in use today. During the months it took to remove the old cottage and erect the new building, Mrs Davies continued her service of refreshments, as best she could, from the old wooden shelter shed, now known as the Hall. Her husband Russell was appointed ranger and is remembered for his splendid work on the Reserve in his 18 years of service. He was known far and wide as the concerned guardian of the Rock.

In 1975 the Racing Club received a grant from the Racecourse Development Fund which enabled a large dam to be excavated in the centre of the racecourse to provide much needed water. The football oval had been placed within the confines of the track many years earlier so there were only a few trees left which had to be removed to make way for the guaranteed water supply which changed the whole appearance of the Reserve. The track was the one designed by Tuxen and completed in 1912 and is still the one in use to this day.

In 1978 a great injection of money enabled much needed improvements to be carried out at the Reserve. Premier, the Hon. Rupert Hamer was instrumental in procuring for the Management Committee, two grants of $40,000 each as well as an



Berry's Head, Hanging Rock.



Morgan's Lookout.

interest free loan to bring the sum to $120,000. In recognition of this tremendous benefit, the Committee presented Mr Hamer with a painting of the Rock by Bronwyn Lester-Smith and it was Clarrie Crozier as Shire President who had the honour of making the presentation at Keatings Hotel, Woodend, when Mr Hamer came to look at the Reserve. Barbecues, toilets and car parks were able to be installed to cope with the surge of tourists brought about as a result of the famous film. The ranger, Russell Davies saw these works completed before retiring at the end of 1979.

The Racing Club was one hundred years old in 1986 and a highly successful Centenary Cup Meeting was held on New Year's Day that year. In the interest of truthful history, it must be mentioned that the Hanging Rock Cup was introduced to the programme in 1880, six years before the Club was formed, but in the circumstances it would seem justifiable and altogether more tidy, to bend the facts slightly and relate the Cup exactly to the Racing Club; the media and the public will certainly do so.

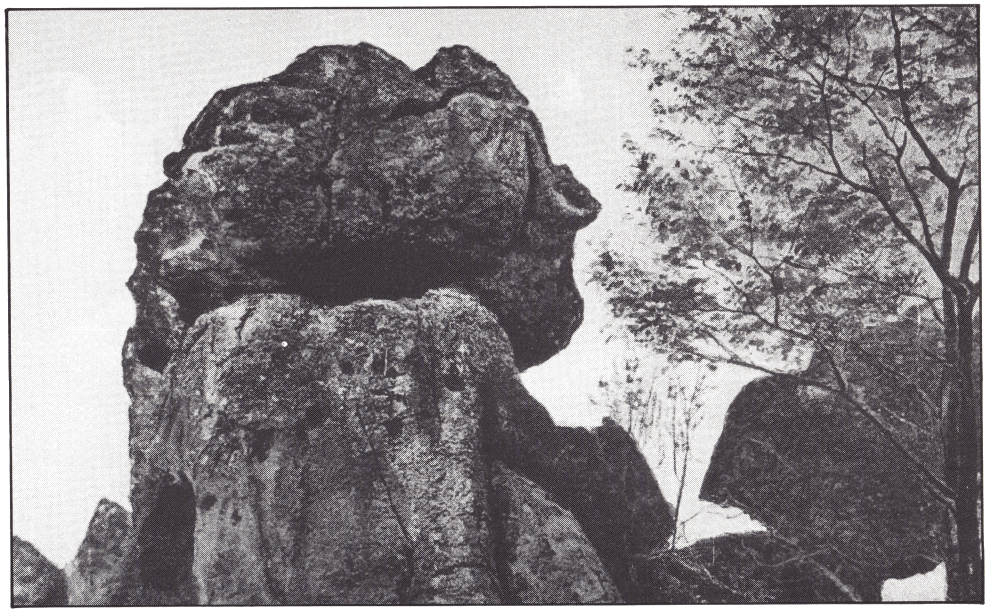
These annual race meetings bring the large crowds but they take place on only two days in the year; for the rest of the time the Rock itself is the attraction and people come to see it from far and near. The impact of its unique formation with fantastic rock shapes and magnificent views, is such that an element of magic seems to pervade the senses, making it easy to believe the stories of mystery. The spice of mystery even extends to the ghosts of bushrangers.

It is the fearful Dan Morgan who is reputed to haunt the Rock – his "blood" can be seen dripping from a crevice – but as Kyneton historian, George Bremner, has said, Morgan, during his two sojourns in Victoria, had little time to draw breath, let alone hide up at the Hanging Rock! McDonald (or McDonnel) whose "Look-out" was much photographed in earlier days, was said to be the leader of a band of robbers. They were spotted from afar one day by troopers at the Camel's Hump and this eventually led to their capture.

An interesting stone was uncovered on the Rock some years ago. It was inscribed with the words "J. O'Brien S M 1851" in which the letter "N" was placed in reverse. Similarly, the inscription "Woodend 1862" on the blue-stone bridge over the Five Mile Creek at Woodend, had the letter "N" placed in reverse – perhaps one can surmise that J. O'Brien was a stone mason who went off to the gold diggings returning some years later to pursue his trade at Woodend.

All the curious shaped rocks were given appropriate names, for instance the "Alligator's Mouth" and the "Ticket Office" with its "Pay Here" aperture were quite realistic – then there were the prominent people who changed according to the times. These included Queen Victoria then Queen Mary, the Duke of Wellington whose "head" seems to be the same rock as "The Sphinx" and a formidable looking Graham Berry who was the outspoken Chief Secretary and Treasurer in the 1870's and later Speaker of the Victorian Parliament. These days the Friends of Hanging Rock provide a map and a guide with the current names.

There is a crevice between gigantic rocks forming a long tunnel, which used to be known as "The Squeeze". Young boys would slither and wriggle their terrifying way down many feet to the open ground below. One of these boys was Geoff Muir, now in his



The Sphinx, alias Duke of Wellington's Head.

View of Camel's Hump from the Rock.

eighties and living nearby. He has lived in the vicinity most of his life and he tells of picnics in the 1920's and 30's when the local farm horses were set to compete on the straight of the course. These large draught horses had to walk a distance, then trot a distance, then with the saddle quickly replaced by harness, they had to pull a ton weight for the final distance. At that time Geoff was employed by the blacksmith at Rochford, a village now reduced to nothing but a name sign on the road to Lancefield. He remembers the excitement when the smithy's horse, Tom, was the winner of the competition.

Through the years there have been countless picnics of every kind, large organised affairs for groups and societies as well as everyday outings for the family. The Reserve is still the chosen place for parties and celebrations, marriages and re-enactments and in recent years it has also been the site for activities on a grander scale – athletic carnivals, hot air balloon flights and vintage car rallies. These are one off events and no doubt others like them will occur from time to time, but everyday it is the tourists who come to experience and enjoy this intriguing rock formation.

Inevitably there is wear and tear. The wooden steps leading up to the Hanging Rock boulder have worn away, but this has brought William Adams' original carriageway into its own. The path has been repaired and made firm giving an easier and more natural ascent by following the westerly contours winding round to the plateau above.

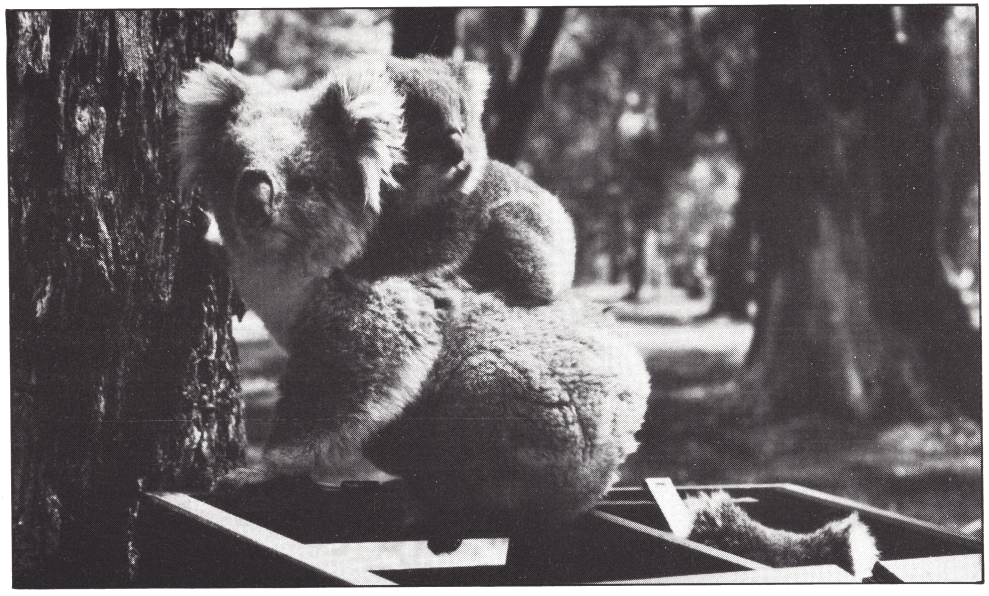
The sheer rock face on the east side was, for some years, used as a training and practice surface for would-be rock climbers, but that is no longer permitted. However there are still facilities for all manner of other sports.

The koala population was sadly dwindling away, the 1983 bushfires and the disease chlamydia having taken their toll, but happily it can now be recorded that on 2nd October 1991, 22 adult koalas, 5 with babies clinging to their backs, all of them caught on French Island the day before, were released on the north slope at the base of the Rock. They looked so clean and fluffy almost as if they had been shampooed! Each box was placed at the foot of a tree and soon the inmates started their climb to the spreading branches which were to become their new home.

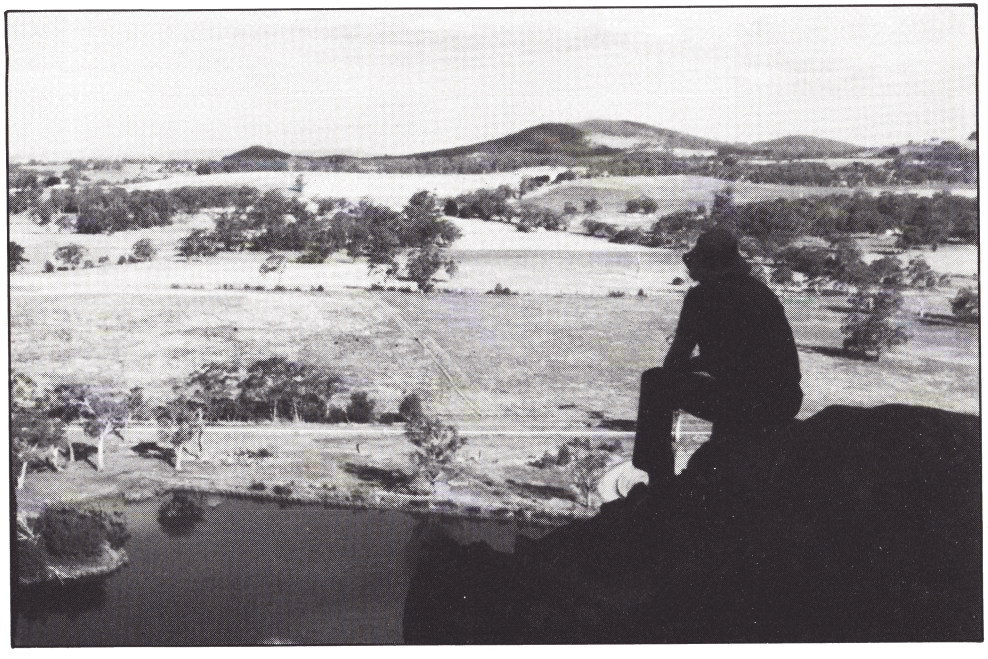
More good news – the wallaby numbers are now increasing.

Fortunately the open acres on the east side of the park have been secured and it is to be hoped that before long trees will be planted so that in years to come, the area may be available for the public.

With the great demands being made on it all the time, it is remarkable how well the small park has withstood the tremendous pressure of people during these past years. That it has done so is due to the constant attention and care of the ranger, Guido Bigolin. It is fitting that this story should end with a tribute to him because as it goes to print, he will be completing ten years of devoted service to the Rock which he has grown to love.



A new home for the Koalas, 2-10-1991.



Guido's favourite spot!
Photos courtesy Barbara Strange.